School Emergency/Crisis Response
A Call To Action

U.S. Department of Education
Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools
Emergency Response and Crisis Management
FY 2004 Grantees Meeting
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Montgomery County Public Schools
Rockville, Maryland

Emergency/Crisis Preparedness

You cannot afford to wait until the day of an emergency/crisis to start developing a response plan or relationships.

--Ed Clarke

Response Phase

- The actions and steps taken to effectively address a school related emergency or crisis
- A multi-hazard approach to develop system wide and school-based response plans, strategies, and protocols
  - criminal incidents – fights, bomb threats, school shootings
  - natural disasters, severe weather, fires
  - bus accidents, medical emergencies
  - haz-mat incidents
  - sudden and unexpected death of student or staff
  - terrorist incident–chemical, biological, or radiological

Response Plan

- Is a comprehensive, detailed, and organized process/method for responding to and effectively managing, as well as resolving, a school related emergency or crisis
- Focuses on pre-incident planning
- Includes upfront efforts in prevention/mitigation, preparedness, and recovery to validate and determine the effectiveness of response
- Reviews, analyzes, and uses data in response efforts:
  - school-based and criminal incidents
  - school and community hazards
  - safety and security assessments
  - lessons learned from incidents and response

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Elements of Response/ Decision Making Phase

- Activate and implement the school system's and school's emergency/crisis response plan
- Activate in an organized and strategic manner
- Activate the school's on-site emergency team (OSET) and/or emergency/crisis response team
- Make a lockdown or evacuation decision
- Manage the emergency/crisis!
- Do not let the emergency/crisis manage you!

Elements of Response/ Decision Making Phase

- The decision maker/incident commander is clearly identified

- Incident commander:
  - assesses the situation and makes immediate decisions about life threatening issues
  - briefs teams members
  - ensures key assignments are carried out
  - reduces or eliminates injuries and/or property damage

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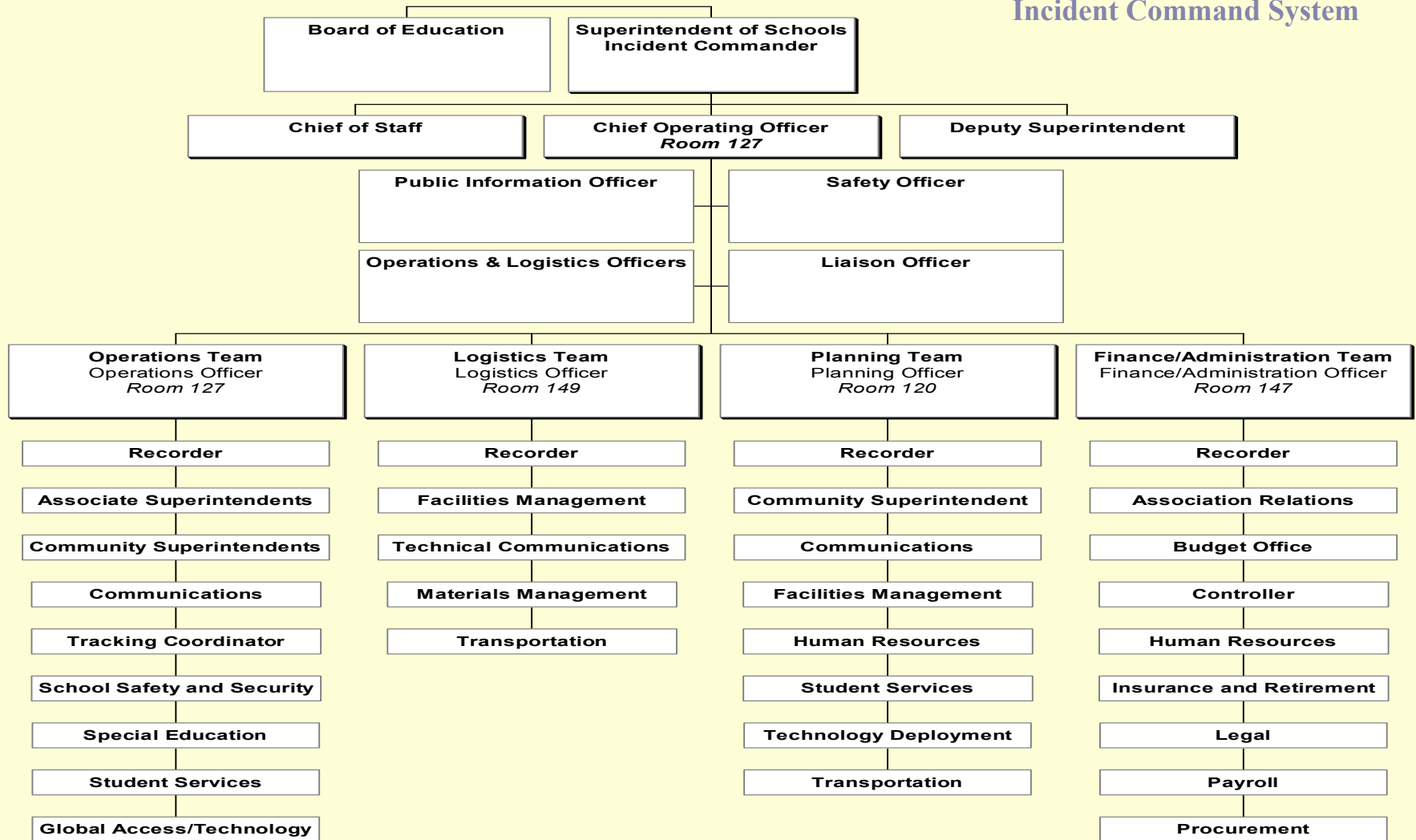# Elements of Response/Decision Making Phase

- Communicate response efforts to impacted and involved parties, such as staff, students, parents, public safety, central office
- Start planning/implementing recovery efforts
- Document incidents
- Debrief

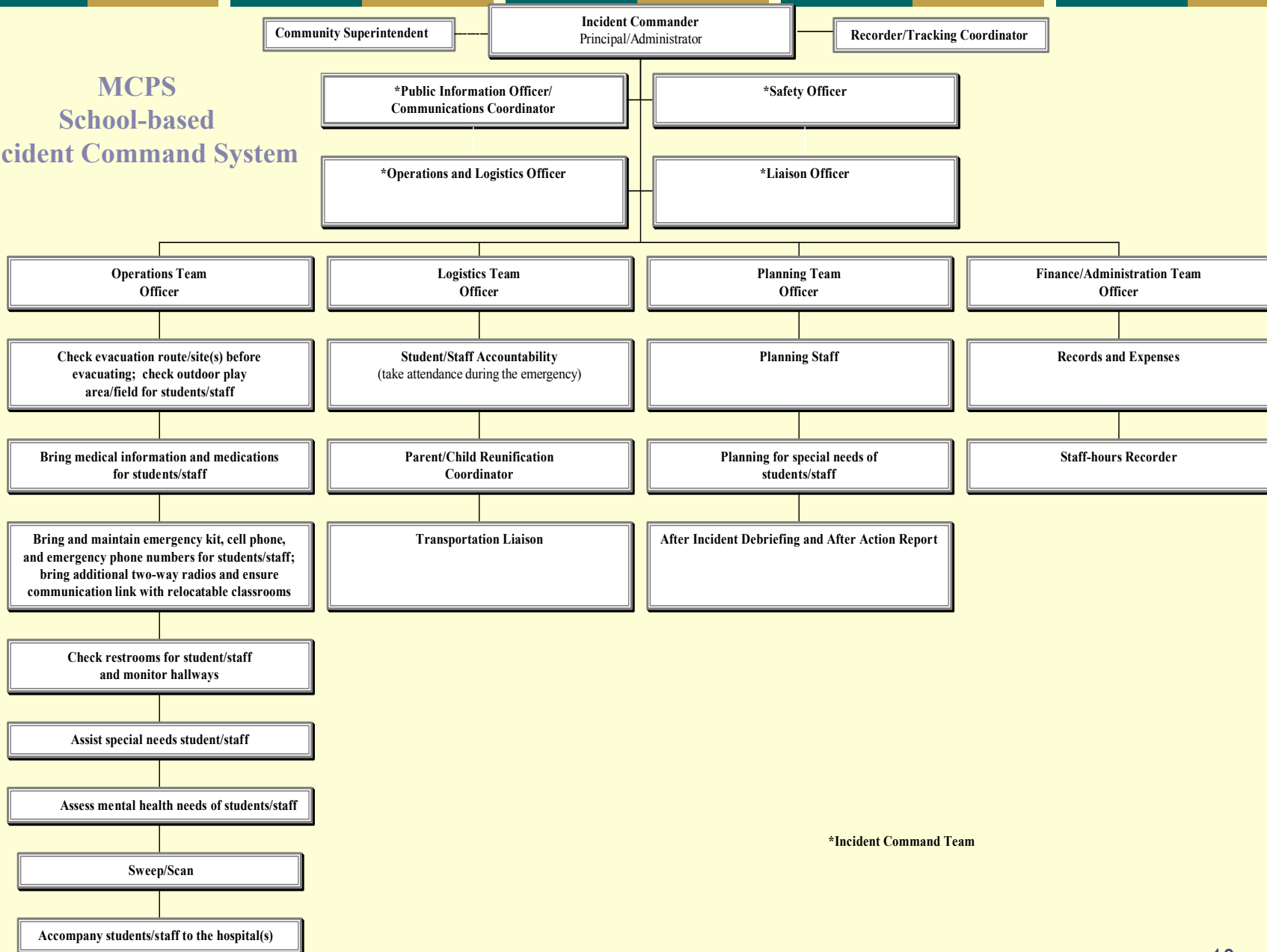# Incident Command System (ICS)

- Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) uses the ICS as the foundation for the systemwide and school-based emergency/crisis response plans

- MCPS on-site emergency teams (OSET) have pre-determined duties and responsibilities

- The school-based incident commander is in charge of leading and resolving the emergency/crisis with the assistance of the OSET

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│  Board of Education   │   │   Superintendent of Schools   │
│                       │   │      Incident Commander       │
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Chief of Staff	Chief Operating Officer *Room 127*	Deputy Superintendent

Public Information Officer	Safety Officer
Operations & Logistics Officers	**Liaison Officer**

Operations Team Operations Officer *Room 127*	Logistics Team Logistics Officer *Room 149*	Planning Team Planning Officer *Room 120*	Finance/Administration Team Finance/Administration Officer *Room 147*
Recorder	Recorder	Recorder	Recorder
Associate Superintendents	Facilities Management	Community Superintendent	Association Relations
Community Superintendents	Technical Communications	Communications	Budget Office
Communications	Materials Management	Facilities Management	Controller
Tracking Coordinator	Transportation	Human Resources	Human Resources
School Safety and Security		Student Services	Insurance and Retirement
Special Education		Technology Deployment	Legal
Student Services		Transportation	Payroll
Global Access/Technology			Procurement

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MCPS School-based Incident Command System

Incident Commander
Principal/Administrator

Community Superintendent

Recorder/Tracking Coordinator

*Public Information Officer/ Communications Coordinator

*Safety Officer

*Operations and Logistics Officer

*Liaison Officer

Operations Team Officer	Logistics Team Officer	Planning Team Officer	Finance/Administration Team Officer
Check evacuation route/site(s) before evacuating; check outdoor play area/field for students/staff	Student/Staff Accountability (take attendance during the emergency)	Planning Staff	Records and Expenses
Bring medical information and medications for students/staff	Parent/Child Reunification Coordinator	Planning for special needs of students/staff	Staff-hours Recorder
Bring and maintain emergency kit, cell phone, and emergency phone numbers for students/staff; bring additional two-way radios and ensure communication link with relocatable classrooms	Transportation Liaison	After Incident Debriefing and After Action Report	
Check restrooms for student/staff and monitor hallways			
Assist special needs student/staff			
Assess mental health needs of students/staff			
Sweep/Scan			
Accompany students/staff to the hospital(s)			

*Incident Command Team

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Role of School-based Incident Commander

- Manages the emergency/crisis in conjunction with public safety
- Collaborates within the structure of a unified command
- Needs to clearly understand that the location of the emergency/crisis may be a crime scene
  - maintain and respect the integrity of the crime scene
  - response staff should not inject themselves in the management of the crime scene
  - response staff must follow direction of the lead public safety/law enforcement agency

Role of school-based Incident Commander

- **Coordinates information sharing and any assistance with the public safety incident commander**

- **Manages and coordinates the school's response efforts from a school command post**

- **Assigns a response team member the role of public safety liaison to coordinate information and response needs with the primary incident commander**

Key Elements/Best Practices for a Successful School Emergency/Crisis Response

- Develop school emergency/crisis plans that include:
  - communication plan for stakeholders
  - on and off site command posts, media staging areas, and parent child reunification sites
  - multi-hazard evacuation sites
  - protocols for special needs students and accountability measures
  - utilization of emergency kits
- Develop emergency/crisis notification protocols/codes with:
  - different levels of notifications and actions required
  - clear instructions/directions for moving to lockdown status or enhanced level of security

Key Elements/Best Practices for a Successful School Emergency/Crisis Response

- **Designate shelter-in-place and parent/child reunification procedures**
  - ➢ **Shelter-in-Place: an enhanced level of safety and security for housing staff/students indoors for a period of time. Nature and duration of shelter-in-place is determined by the emergency and by public safety officials**
  - ➢ **Parent/child reunification: the orderly and efficient process of reuniting children with their parents/guardians**
- **Conduct timely incident debriefings to identify lessons learned and make necessary changes to the response plan**
- **Document all aspects of the incident in a detailed after action report**

Key Elements/Best Practices for a Successful School Emergency/Crisis Response

- Develop positive working relationships with local public safety officers and officials
  - request that public safety help develop and review the systemwide and school's emergency/crisis response plan
  - share response plan with public safety personnel
  - familiarize public safety personnel with building/campus and emergency notification protocols
- Develop a positive working relationship with governmental emergency management team
  - establish a seat at the emergency management team table
- Train all members of the school response team so that they understand their roles

Key Elements/Best Practices for a Successful School Emergency/Crisis Response

- Educate parents/students of the systemwide and school's emergency/crisis protocols and response plans
  - parents/students must know their roles in an emergency/crisis
- Conduct emergency/crisis preparedness drills, tabletop or functional exercises validate your response plan
- Create memorandums of understanding, mutual aid agreements, and partnership agreements with emergency/crisis response partners
- Constantly evaluate/assess emergency/crisis protocols and response plans to ensure continuous improvement
  - benchmark with other school districts
  - review national and local school related incidents

Emergency/Crisis Communication Response Resources

- Nextel emergency communication cell phone
- Two-way radios (walkie-talkies)
- NOAA weather alert radio
- Internal school computers
- Development of school specific Web sites and telephone trees
- School system Web site
- School system cable television
- National school notification service
  - www.schools-out.com
- Local government cable television
- Local emergency radio and television stations

School Emergency/Crisis Response Summary

- Develop systemwide and school-based response guidelines/plans to fit needs of district
- Establish a emergency/crisis response plan that includes effective mitigation and prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery strategies
- Include a multi-hazard approach
- Continually evaluate response plans/efforts – this is key to a safe and secure learning and working environment
- Create effective public safety partnerships/relationships
- Educate all stakeholders on response efforts and plans
- Train and practice drills regularly

Tips for the Successful School Administrator/Incident Commander

- Display a sense of calm in a stressful environment
- Maintain clear, concise, and good communication
- Model and practice problem analysis, critical thinking
- Model good decision making
- Assign duties and delegate appropriately
- Pay attention to detail
- Manage the emergency/crisis!
- Do not let the emergency/crisis manage you!
- Conduct critical debriefings and prepare detailed after action report
- Continually train and practice
- Create a winning team spirit
- Patience, patience, patience
- Leadership, leadership, leadership

5P² Emergency/Crisis Preparedness Formula

poor	proper
planning	planning
produces	produces
pitiful	positive
performance	performance
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Grade: F	Grade: A

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